

# Fathers: discipline and Instruct Your Children



**Thrust Statement:** God wants fathers and mothers to teach their children His Holy Word.

**Scripture Reading:** Deuteronomy 6: 4-9; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Ephesians 6:4

Today is a day in which individuals remember their fathers. Since this day is called Father's Day, it seems appropriate to draw examples from the Scriptures of the things that should help every father in the rearing of his own children. Fathers, as well as mothers, have an awesome responsibility to their children to teach them about God and His interaction with His creation. Not only are fathers and mothers to instruct their children but they are also to discipline them in order to bring about a certain kind of behavior that will bring glory to God. God, in His infinite wisdom, has given children parents whose power and prestige are greater than all the influences of society. But today, this message focuses more on fathers than on mothers, even though what is said about the father is equally true of the mother. This one person that I wish to focus attention on in this message is none other than that of the father himself. The father can make a big difference in his child's life. This fact of the father's importance cannot be overstated. Children have a predisposition to want to be like their fathers.

Just as Christians are to be examples to other Christians, so fathers are to be examples to their own children in their daily walk with God. Do you attend church on a regular basis? Do you pray with your children? Do you read or tell your children about Bible characters? Do you read the Word of God to your children? Have you told your children about God's creation of the universe? Do you teach your children about the things of God? Have you told your children about the scheme of redemption? Have you told your children about Jesus' death upon the cross? Have you told your children that God demands a certain kind of behavior? Do your children know anything about the Ten

Commandments? What are you teaching your children about God?

If one does not relate to his or her children the things of God, the next generation will not remember the mighty deeds of God. It is imperative that parents teach their children about God and His mighty works. Is God concerned about parents teaching their children? Does God demand that parents teach their children? When God led the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, God, toward the end of the forty years of wilderness wanderings, instructed Moses to leave instructions to parents concerning the religious education of their children. He writes:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.<sup>a 5</sup> Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.<sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.<sup>7</sup> Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.<sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.<sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (**Deuteronomy 6:4-9**). [\[1\]](#)

God wants His Word taught to the children. Why? Everyone knows that the human heart is prone to go astray. When parents “sit at home,” “walk along the road,” “lie down” at night, and “get up” in the morning, God wants the home to be a place of godly instructions. God wants parents to shape and mold the lives of their children to conform to the ways of holiness. Fathers and mothers should never forget that God is working in them to accomplish His objectives. Moses admonished the parents to discuss God’s Word in the home and to allow the Word to guide one’s conduct twenty-four hours a day. “Tie them,” Moses writes, “as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.<sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” How does this command influence your own behavior in the instructions of your children’s religious education in the home? Is there a Bible in your home? Are you teaching your children the Word of God?

One can hardly read this instruction from God without reflecting upon the words of Paul to Timothy:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,<sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (**2 Timothy 3:14-17**).

“All Scripture” includes the Old Testament writings. Can your children say, “from infancy I have known the Holy Scriptures”? Where did Timothy learn the Scriptures “from infancy”? Listen, once more, to Paul as he calls attention to Timothy’s background training:

I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. <sup>6</sup> For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. <sup>7</sup> For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline (**2 Timothy 1:5-7**).

Yes, every family still needs parents that will instill into the hearts of their children a love for God. Children need to be told about creation; children need to be told about Jesus, and children need to be told about the Holy Spirit. Children should be told the stories of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and how these three Hebrew boys refused to obey the king's order to bow down to a golden image. The story of Daniel and the lion's den is a story that speaks of courage and devotion to the God of heaven. Have you ever told your children about Joseph and his brothers in the land of Egypt? Have you ever told your children about Jesus' death upon the cross? What do your children know about the Bible? How much do you appreciate the Bible? Are you aware of the persecution of those who had a part in giving the Word of God to English speaking people in their own language? Would you be willing to die for the Scriptures? The following is the story of one man who was burned (1536 CE) for translating the Bible into the English language:

Tyndale was a man of heroic stature and died a martyr's death. In England alone, more than 1,000 people were burned between 1400 and 1557 for the sake of the Gospel. Tyndale's books and tracts (or "pestilent glosses" as his enemies referred to them) were smuggled into England wrapped in bales of wool or cloth, or sacks of flour by fellow "Lollards". Had he remained a Catholic priest Tyndale would no doubt have been canonized as a saint, but had he remained a Catholic he would not have attempted to translate the Bible without official sanction. Although the Bible was available in the vernacular in much of Europe, the only version of the Scripture tolerated in England was St. Jerome's Latin translation which dated back to the 4th century. It was thus a closed book even to most clergymen. Tyndale was determined to make God's Word accessible to all men.<sup>[2]</sup>

This story about Tyndale is cited in order to bring to one's attention the sacrifices some have made in seeking to make the Bible available to all who wish to read. This man died in order to make the Word of God accessible to all men. Hopefully, this tragic story will reinforce the need to revere the Word of God and to read the Word of God on a daily basis to your children. Is reading the Holy Scriptures very important in the life of God's people? People in Tyndale's day paid as much as \$103.00 for just one copy of the Bible. Individuals would pool their money in order to purchase a Bible. After purchase, individuals would gather as a group and someone would read the Holy Word.

Listen to Paul as he exhorts Timothy to engage in the public reading of the Word: "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching" (**1 Timothy 4:13**). Again, Paul, in writing to the Christians at Colosse, closed his short epistle with emphasis upon the reading of his epistle to the church: "After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea" (**Colossians 4:13**). When Paul wrote to the

Thessalonians, he also charged them to read this letter to the whole church: “I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers” (1 [Thessalonians 5:27](#)). The Book of Psalms begins with one of the characteristics that is true of the man or woman who is blessed: “But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night” ([Psalm 1:2](#)). Is your delight in God’s Word? Hopefully, you, too, can express your love for God’s law as one of the psalmists did: “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long” ([Psalm 119:97](#)).

Fathers and mothers have a responsibility to teach their children so that they will put their trust in God. This author, Dallas Burdette, is a classic example of one’s father reading the Word of God to his child in order to create within him a desire to trust and serve God. I believe that I am where I am today as a result of my godly father, Pete Burdette (1909-1982), reading to me the Holy Scriptures. I still remember very vividly my father reading to me the Bible stories that caught my imagination. My late grandfather, Elbert Dallis Miller (1885-1969), told me that I related to him that I wanted to preach when I was only six years old. Where did this come from? I believe it came from my father who created an intense desire within my mind to serve God. The Scriptures address the purpose for teaching one’s children. The psalmist paints a picture of this in the following words:

O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. <sup>2</sup> I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old— <sup>3</sup> what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. <sup>4</sup> We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. <sup>5</sup> He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, <sup>6</sup> so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. <sup>7</sup> Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands ([Psalm 78:1-7](#)).

This psalm sets forth the necessity of biblical tradition in the life of God’s people. Even today, Children, as a whole, become Christians through the teachings of their parents. One can now understand more clearly why God admonished the parents to discuss God’s Word in the home with their children. Parents have an obligation to guide the minds of their children. Parents must instill into their children an understanding of God in order that they might put their hope in Him. Parents must tell the next generation and the next generation must tell the next generation—“even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.” Are you telling your children about how God became flesh in order to bring redemption to those who believe in Jesus? God’s grace can cure bad behavior. When one reflects upon the story of salvation, this retelling of the story leads to praise. This remembering by the parents will invoke the heart to rely upon God, and it will also put on view one’s commitment of his or her soul.

### CONCLUSION

Parents who neglect their responsibilities in teaching their children biblical tradition do so at their own peril. Spiritual education of the children stood, as it were, foremost in the mind of God. Even with the feast of the Passover, God wanted the children to be taught about their past. God desires that parents instruct their children in

the fear of the Lord. Children should be taught to memorize the Ten Commandments, segments of the Sermon on the Mount, and many other Scriptures, such as, for example, **John 3:16**. One purpose in teaching children about the Scriptures is in order that they might not sin against God. The psalmist writes: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (**Psalms 119:11**).

Fathers teach by example, that is to say, by their language and by neglect of that which is of value. Also, a father who does not pray is teaching his children not to pray. A father who fails to neglect the public assembly of the saints is teaching his children to neglect it. The one who does not read his Bible is teaching his children not to read it. To allow a child to grow up without religious training would be the same as to allow your garden to be overrun with weeds, briars, and thorns. If the parent does not instruct his or her child, the child, too, will be overtaken with the ways of the world. If a father does not teach his children truth, then others will teach them error. How should a father bring up his children? Listen to Paul: “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (**Ephesians 6:4**). Are you training and instructing your children in the Lord?

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<sup>[1]</sup> All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984).

<sup>[2]</sup> For a detailed study of William Tyndale, see “William Tyndale” [ON-LINE]. Available from <http://www.williamtyndale.com/0crimesofwilliamtyndale.htm> (accessed 14 June 2002).